



First Hill Neighborhood Notes

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9:30 AM-12:30 PM

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We drove the perimeter of the neighborhood first, for an overview. Then we drove it again, stopping at each intersection to photograph entrances and other features. Then, we drove the north/south grid, beginning at 8th and moving east to Harvard. Finally, we drove the E/W grid from University to Marion, then down Broadway to Yesler.

Summary

First Hill is defined by its biggest industry, which is medical science. There are three very large hospitals (Swedish Medical Center, Harborview Medical Center, and Virginia Mason Hospital) and several smaller medical centers (such as Northwest Medical Center and the Polyclinic) within this neighborhood. Much of the surrounding real estate is dedicated to supporting this industry: hotels, apartments, and some retail businesses.

"Landmark" churches are prominent features of First Hill as well. Particularly visible are the St. James Cathedral on Terry between Marion and Columbia, the First Baptist Church on Harvard between Seneca and Spring, and the First Presbyterian Church on 8th between Spring and Madison.

South of Alder Street the neighborhood composition changes from big city/hospital to small-apartment housing. Between Alder and Yesler are several blocks of two-story wood-faced apartment complexes collectively called “Yesler Terrace Housing.” This housing development has a sense of continuity and community, with a community center on Yesler and a community garden on the hill above S. Jackson. It is quiet, and has more of a multicultural feel than the rest of this neighborhood, perhaps due to spillover from the Chinatown/International District.

There are no First Hill identity banners, but there are a few First Hill directional signs along the perimeter. Several businesses within the neighborhood core have “First Hill” in their names. Virginia Mason Hospital has its own blue identity banners; Swedish Hospital and Harborview Medical Center have distinctive signage. There are a few medical-themed murals: on Virginia Mason Clinic on University Street and at the First Hill Medical Center, on the corner of James and Boren.

Observations

Perimeter and Entrances

Union Street forms the northern border of the neighborhood. The largest entrances in this section are at Boren, Minor, and Harvard streets.

Broadway, the neighborhood's eastern perimeter, is an extremely busy street. Between Marion and E. James, the Seattle University campus (outside the neighborhood) faces Swedish Hospital (within the neighborhood). To the south, Yesler Terrace moderate-income housing dominates the architecture.

Major entrances along the eastern border include Madison, E. James, Jefferson, Terrace, Alder, Broadway itself, (where the border diverges onto Boren), and Yesler.

Along the I-5 border of First Hill, there are several major entrances to the neighborhood: 8th Avenue S., James, Cherry, Madison, Spring, and Seneca. This is a region of large apartment buildings, interspersed with a couple of churches and several parking lots.

Interior streets

8th Avenue (in this neighborhood) begins at the Central Freeway Park. It passes through a region of large apartment buildings, some of which are older (but most appear well-kept and expensive). First Presbyterian Church, a large modern church, faces 8th Avenue, and the street ends at Jefferson Terrace.

9th Ave is a larger thoroughfare in this neighborhood, although it has no direct entrances from the outside. Of note is Virginia Mason Hospital, which has its own set of identity banners along 9th, Spring, Boren, Seneca, Terry, and University. Also on 9th, between Jefferson and Alder, is Harborview Medical Center: a very distinctive Art Deco building with a commanding view of the waterfront and Elliot Bay.

Terry Ave. enters the neighborhood from the Pike/Pine/Denny Triangle region, but is interrupted by Virginia Mason Hospital. A major landmark on Terry is the St. James Cathedral (between Marion and Columbia), which has two very dramatic spires, visible from many directions.

Boren is the busiest street within the interior of the neighborhood. It's a major arterial, and a major entrance from both



ends. It is lined with large apartment buildings and a few medical buildings. O'Dea High School is a landmark (between Marion and Columbia). The Frye art museum (between Columbia and Cherry) is a destination.

Minor Ave is dominated by Swedish Medical Center and associated buildings to the south. At the north end are several well-tended historic homes and mansions, such as the Simon Green Mansion and the Tate Mansion House.

Summit, Boylston, and Harvard are quiet streets with upscale housing and a few medical offices.

The “retail” core of First Hill lies along Madison, between Harvard and Terry: small shops, restaurants, banks, and other service buildings are concentrated here.

Columbia Street has a cobblestone section between 7th and 8th Avenues.



1 union/terry



2 union/boren



3 union/minor



4 union/summit



5 union/boylston



6 union/harvard



7 union/broadway



8 broadway/madison



12 broadway/james



13 broadway/jefferson



14 broadway/alder



15 broadway/boren



17 boren/yesler



18 borden/broadway



20 7th/james



21 7th/cherry



22 7th/columbia



23 7th/marion



24 7th/madison



25 7th/spring



26 7th/seneca



38



39



40



53



59



60



47



56



90



91



97



100



101



102



108



pike and pine 1.20



pike and pine 1.23



pike and pine 1.70



commerical core 1.113





94



95



96



61



93



98



99



106



107



109



110



62



65



66



71



74



75



76



80



83



86



87



89



92



103



104



105



3.57



3.58



3.59



4.141